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FROM Mr Burrows  
F.O. MINUTE

No.

Dated May 7, 1948

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H.M. Government's future Policy towards Palestine.

Summary of the most probable course of events in Palestine after termination of the Mandate and suggested policy to be followed. Three assumptions have been made :-  
1) Partition decision of November 29 will not have been rescinded  
2) there will be a temporary truce in Jerusalem  
3) there will be no truce for the whole of Palestine.

Last Paper

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References

~~E 6676~~

E 6677.

(Print)

(How disposed of)

*See minutes with (Minutes.) (including an opportunity for communism in the Jewish state)*

*JB  
29/V*

(Action completed)

*cad  
31/5*

(Index)

*[Signature]  
13/10/48*

Next Paper

E 6680

I attach a memo. on  
 Palestine after May 14, and  
 two interesting letters from  
 Mr Beeley. #

These are  
 entered at  
 E 6676 and  
 6677.

DR.  
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JAB Inverness

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Seen by Mr Wright  
 Copy to Sir O. Sargent.

P.S. / per S. J. C.



Nothing to be Written in this Margin.

MEMORANDUM.

Palestine after May 14.

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22 MAY 1948

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This paper attempts to summarise the most probable course of events in Palestine after we **relinquish** the Mandate and to suggest the policy to be followed. Three assumptions have been made.

- (1) The partition decision of November 29 will not have been rescinded by the United Nations.
- (2) There will be a temporary truce for some area at Jerusalem.
- (3) There will be no truce for the whole of Palestine.

2. If there is no truce for Jerusalem the general picture will not be greatly changed but everything would be proportionately more difficult. If there is a truce for the whole of Palestine the whole ~~of~~ picture would of course be completely changed.

3. On May 15 the Jews will proclaim a Jewish State within the boundaries of the United Nations partition decision of November 29. This state will probably be recognised almost immediately by Russia and the satellites, *possibly some other Powers.* There will also no doubt be strong pressure on the American administration to recognise it.

4. The first actions of the Jewish Govt. will be -

- (a) to bring in many thousands of able-bodied immigrants from Cyprus and Europe.
  - (b) to arrange for the import of supplies of oil, probably from Rumania, food from America
- and/

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and war material from Europe pending the removal of the U.S. arms embargo;

(c) to take military action to consolidate their state. This will involve, within the Jewish State, the capture of Safad if this had not taken place previously and in addition possibly the seizure of strategic points and communications outside the Jewish state, e.g. Lydda, the communications between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Jaffa, Beersheba and Acre;

(d) possible arrangements for the arrival of air forces, either volunteers from America or, conceivably, from satellite countries.

5. The Arabs will also proclaim a state on May 15, probably extending all over Palestine. They will probably renew their offer of citizenship with local autonomy to the Jews. They will then ask the neighbouring Arab States ~~ixex~~ to send their armed forces into Palestine in order to protect the Arabs from attacks by the Jews.

6. The Syrian and Lebanese forces will probably enter the area round Lake Tiberias (which is in the U.N. Jewish state) and attempt to recapture Safad, destroy the Jewish settlements in this area and join up with the central district of the U.N. Arab State. They will quite possibly be defeated by the Jews or at any rate unable to make much progress owing to poor administration and maintenance. The Lebanese will no doubt go down the coast to Acre and might succeed in holding that.

7. The Arab Legion would enter Palestine mainly by the Allenby Bridge and would attempt to/  
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to occupy the Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron areas, perhaps including Beersheba and perhaps extending across the southern Jewish area to Gaza if the Egyptian Army have not moved in there. They would also no doubt secure the narrow strip of Palestinian territory on the Gulf of Aqaba.

8. It seems impossible at present to look much further ahead. The Arab Legion could probably hold the central Arab area fairly comfortably but might get into considerably difficulty if it tried to do more than this, e.g. an expedition to Jaffa or Haifa. If the Jewish forces received really strong reinforcements from Europe and large supplies of war material, they might attempt to absorb the whole of Palestine and, particularly if they had become involved in hostilities with the Arab Legion, to invade Transjordan.

9. This probable sequence of events calls for a number of decisions on our part which may be grouped under four heads -
- (1) What advice should we give the Arab States, and perhaps specifically to Transjordan, between now and May 15?
  - (2) What effect does action by Transjordan on the lines suggested above have on our Treaty, including in particular, the case of a possible Jewish invasion of Transjordan? (If Iraq forces are involved the question of the Iraq Treaty might become relevant.)
  - (3) Possible action with U.S.A. to limit the fighting by means of arms embargoes or in some other manner such as a blockade.
  - (4) Action by the United Nations.

10. Before considering these questions a short statement of the legal position seems essential:-

The Jews will claim that they are setting up their state in virtue of the United Nations decision.

Our legal advice is that this view is not correct.

The decision of November 29 instructed the United Nations Commission to take various steps in Palestine culminating in the establishment of Jewish and Arab states with economic union (e.g. in particular each state had to draft a constitution and make a declaration about the Holy Places, minority rights, citizenship, etc.)

~~Most~~ <sup>not</sup> Practically none of these steps will have been taken and the Jewish state will be setting itself up by its own efforts and not those of the United Nations Commission. From the legal point of view there will, therefore, be nothing to choose between the claims of the Jewish and Arab State though clearly from the point of view of public opinion, particularly in America, the United Nations decision will give the Jewish state a considerable appearance of legality.

11. If the Arab armies invaded the territory of Palestine but without coming into conflict with the Jews, i.e. if they stuck to the purely Arab areas, they would not necessarily be doing anything illegal or contrary to the United Nations Charter. If they cross the United Nations frontier into the Jewish state they would, as shown above, not ipso facto be doing anything illegal though in practice they would clearly be laying themselves open to the censure of the United Nations and of public opinion.

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If they came into conflict with the Jews a situation would no doubt be created of which the Security Council should take cognisance <sup>as</sup> ~~of~~ a breach of the peace.

12. As regards the relevance of our Treaty with Transjordan, the only crucial point seems to be to decide when article 4 comes into play, i.e. when our United Nations obligations begin to come into conflict with our obligations under the Treaty and therefore supersede them. This point is reached, according to our legal advice, when the United Nations agree to take action to prevent measures being taken by Transjordan, or to enforce some decision against that country.

13. Suggestions for our policy under the headings in paragraph 9 above are, therefore, as follows -

(1) Advice to the Arab states or perhaps specifically only to Transjordan.

In the light of the above we should try to avoid discussion of the legal and technical position but to concentrate on the military and practical side, with particular reference to repercussions in western countries. To this end we should tell King Abdullah very confidentially that if he feels bound to go into Palestine, we hope for his own sake and also in order to facilitate the maintenance of our close relations with him, that his forces will not go beyond clearly Arab areas and will not attack existing Jewish settlements or villages. The critical point in this is what

is/

is the definition of "purely Arab areas". It is difficult to avoid suggesting that this should be interpreted for present purposes as meaning the "United Nations Arab State" but we could in practice presumably not object to Arab Legion occupation of the Negeb. We would make it clear to Abdullah that in giving this advice we were not pre-judging the final ~~decisive~~ settlement of Palestine but that in our view, if he stuck to these areas, which in the present military situation seems probably about as much as he could safely do, we did not anticipate very serious international opposition and that we would not expect to be under very severe pressure to modify our relations with him. If, however, he attacked an obviously Jewish area he would lay himself open to United Nations action and would almost certainly make it necessary for us, under article 4<sup>of</sup> the Treaty, to give greater weight to our United Nations obligations than to our relations with him.

(2) Effect of the Anglo-Transjordan Treaty.

We would probably have to make it clear to King Abdullah that if his forces, while remaining in purely Arab areas, were attacked by the Jews, we could probably not give him armed assistance under the Treaty because he would have become involved in war by going outside his own territory. If as a result of these circumstances the Jews invaded Transjordan, we should almost certainly feel ourselves bound to stop them at the border, but we need not say this to Abdullah in advance.

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Our advice to the other Arab States should be on the same general lines but much less specific, i.e. that we consider they would avoid international difficulties if they stuck to purely Arab areas and did not attack the Jews. <sup>NP</sup>/If the Arabs adopted this course and became involved in hostilities as a result of Jewish attack on United Nations Arab areas, there would then seem to be no obligation on us to cut off the arms supplies we are now making to countries with whom we are in treaty relations or to cut off the Arab Legion subsidy, since the Arab States could be properly represented as acting in collective self-defence of a territory which had asked for their assistance.

(3) Limiting the conflict.

Mr. Henderson of the State Department has recently indicated that American opinion would almost certainly demand the raising of the U.S. embargo on the supply of arms to the Middle East when the Jews set up their State, particularly if we still supply arms to the Arab States. If, however, hostilities started by aggression by the Jews outside the boundaries of the United Nations Jewish State, e.g. an attack on Jaffa, we might be able to represent strongly to the U.S. Government that the present position should continue, since it would be unfair for them to supply arms to the aggressors.

If, however, the conflict did not start in this way (by clear Jewish attack), or  
could/

could not be clearly shown to have started in this way, it would probably be extremely difficult to prevent the raising of the U.S. embargo unless there were either a general embargo imposed by the United Nations on the delivery of arms to Palestine and the Arab States or physical control was established to prevent the entry of arms into Palestine by land or sea. In the latter event, there would be no need for us to stop arms deliveries to the Arab States, since these would be prevented by the patrols from getting into Palestine.

It is quite likely that there would be no Security Council embargo or that, if there were, it would not be observed by Russia and the satellites. Physical control by land and sea patrols would be infinitely more effective, but would of course mean that the U.S. would have to provide troops for the land patrols. It has been suggested that if this course were to be adopted, the best United Nations arrangement to provide authority for such action would be for the Assembly to give the trusteeship for Palestine without any political conditions to the U.K., the U.S.A. and France. The only action to be taken under such trusteeship would then be to institute patrols against the entry of arms and immigrants and the establishment of some neutral body to act as mediator as circumstances permitted, i.e. the trustees would not be bound to attempt to restore order inside Palestine. If, as is likely, the Arab Legion were/

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were already in Palestine, and if King Abdullah was willing to put it, or part of it, at the disposal of the trustee authority, and the Jewish Agency were prepared to put the Hagana at its disposal, this might make an important contribution to the maintenance of order inside Palestine.

There should be further immediate discussions with the United States on all the questions mentioned under this heading.

(4) United Nations Action.

The most that seems likely to emerge from the United Nations before May 15th is the appointment of a neutral authority on the lines suggested by the Colonial Secretary, and the appointment of a neutral municipal ~~commander~~<sup>Commissioner</sup> for Jerusalem. The neutral authority for the whole of Palestine would have no functions unless both sides were willing to give it some, or to use its good offices as mediator. It would, nevertheless, be extremely valuable to have such a body in existence. As regards the situation after May 15th, Russia would no doubt raise in the Security Council action by the Arab armies in Palestine, but it is extremely doubtful whether sufficient votes could be obtained for any decision, apart from the possibility of our veto, unless there was flagrant Arab attack on an obviously Jewish area. Our efforts in the United Nations would be directed towards securing agreement on means of limiting the conflict.

14. <sup>An</sup>~~One~~ additional factor which must be borne in mind throughout is the extreme political and economic instability of most of the Arab States. The Governments will be under severe pressure from the extremists if they do not take extreme measures. On the other hand, if they ~~do~~ take extensive military action, they will very quickly become bankrupt and if, as is quite likely, they suffer military reverses in the process, the internal situation might become entirely out of hand.

15. Another important factor is the tempting opportunity offered to the Soviet Government of exploiting the internal situation in the Jewish community for purely communist purposes in the hope of penetrating the administration and security forces of the new Jewish state and finally using it as a Soviet bridge-head in the Middle East.

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Mr. Burrows

I suggest that you should add to the memorandum on "Palestine after May 14th" the following final paragraph:-

"Another factor to be borne in mind is the very tempting opportunity offered to Moscow of exploiting the internal situation in the Jewish community for purely Communist purposes, in the hope of penetrating the administration and security forces of the new Jewish State and finally using it as a Soviet bridgehead in the Middle East. Their opportunity will be enhanced if, owing to British or Anglo-American aloofness, the Russians achieve a privileged and influential position as principal ally of the Jews. Should the development of events point to the likelihood of that, we may have to consider, in order to forestall it, the adoption of a more friendly attitude towards the Jewish State. This might even involve early recognition of it, despite the disadvantage of offending the Arab world".

My reasons for this suggestion are as follows:-

(1) The main elements in the Russians' opportunity are the following:-

In their emergency the Jews will be inclined to accept help from whatever quarter it is forthcoming;

The support for Partition received at U.N.O. from the Russians and their satellites has produced a certain current of pro-Soviet feeling;

A fair proportion of Palestinian Jews are Russian speakers and there are strong Communist elements among the Jewish dissident terrorists;

The innate tendency of the Jewish mentality, exasperated by the pressure of events, has produced in Palestine an atmosphere of messianic fanaticism and ruthless totalitarianism which is as akin to Communism as it is to Nazism;

The rapid emergence of a new administrative machine, and especially of a strong Jewish police force with wide powers, offers great opportunities to any who would penetrate them and use them for political ends.

All/

All these circumstances provide an opening which the Kremlin must surely have perceived and can be expected to exploit. Secret information tends to confirm this impression.

(2) The opportunity will be greatly enhanced if the embargo on Jewish immigration is raised and if recognition of the Jewish State is followed by the arrival of Soviet diplomatic and consular representatives and even perhaps (as events develop and owing to British or Anglo-American cold-shouldering) of military and other experts. The new State may well emerge from its initial struggle for independence in an internal condition resembling those liberated countries of Europe in which a Resistance movement, surrounded by an aureole of glamour and achievement, had come, partly or wholly, under secret Communist control. A crisis would inevitably follow, as in Greece, when the State attempted to disarm the dissidents and terrorists. It may prove of the utmost importance to us that the Russians should not be in Palestine, as we were in Greece, the arbiters in that quarrel.

(3) Whatever the disadvantages of offending the Arab world, we surely cannot afford to turn our backs on the Jews to such an extent that they are forced to open their doors wide to Russian influence, with all its incalculable evil consequences for our whole position in the Middle East.

*D. Balfour*

8th May, 1948.

*Many thanks. I have added a para. on the lines suggested, & incorporated some of the other points.*

*JAB*  
*P.5*

*Mr Balfour*  
*11/5*

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